DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 037 677 AC 006 744

TITLE	Unfinished Business; A W.E.A. Policy Statement.
INSTITUTION	Workers Educational Association, London (England).
PUB DATE	[68]
NOTE	21p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.15
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Education, Educational Needs, *Educational Objectives, Educational Resources, *National Organizations, *Professional Associations
IDENTIFIERS	*Great Britain, Workers Educational Association

ABSTRACT

In accordance with a 1966 recommendation that it "should thoroughly and radically re-examine its policies," the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) of Great Britain has prepared a policy statement covering the following: the WEA as an educational movement; the social relevance of adult education; the special responsibility of the WEA for labor education, the educationally disadvantaged, and the meeting of socioeconomic change; resources and requirements (including the key role played by volunteers); and the WEA as a direct provider of educational programs. (LY)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED037677

Unfinished Business

A W.E.A. Policy Statement

Workers' Educational Association
Temple House
9 Upper Berkeley Street
London W1

A0006744

Unfinished Business — A W.E.A. Policy Statement

In 1966 the W.E.A. published the report of a Working Party on Structure, Organisation, Finance and Staffing. Many of its recommendations were approved by a special conference and are now being implemented. The final recommendation was that as soon as possible the Association 'should thoroughly and radically re-examine its policies'. This report is presented to conference to assist the movement in that process.

Unfinished Business
A W.E.A. Policy Statement

1 The W.E.A. is a voluntary organisation. It shares many of the characteristics of other voluntary associations which play an essential part in public life. It came into being to demonstrate a need and show society how it could be met. Its pioneering work has been an important factor in the modern development of adult education both at home and abroad. That opportunity for adult education is now regarded as a right for all who desire it is largely because the founders of the W.E.A. insisted on that right and they and their successors have worked for nearly seventy years to consolidate it.

2 The other special characteristics of the W.E.A. are that it is a nation-wide, independent and democratic movement harnessing the energies of a large number of people who believe in its purposes. These are the promotion and provision of adult education throughout the community, in response to changing social needs, especially the needs of those who have not had the benefits of formal education beyond the minimum. To the W.E.A. adult education has a positive social role and it seeks to encourage informed discussion and study of the problems facing society in the belief that this is vital to the health of democracy. It seeks to develop serious and sustained study and has benefited in doing so from its partnership with the extra-mural departments of the universities.

3 The W.E.A. is also a movement campaigning for educational and social advance, not committed to any specific ideology or creed, not afraid to examine all points of view on subjects, however controversial. It draws great strength from its organic links with the trade unions and other voluntary social organisations, and in its turn contributes greatly to their educational activities. It looks to the D.E.S. and to local education authorities for sustenance and support, and obtains this in considerable measure without prejudicing its independence. Such a partnership of statutory and voluntary bodies, of trade unions and universities is a unique contribution to a mature democracy.

4 Not all voluntary movements live to see their objectives secured so fully. If they do they either dwindle into obscurity or terminate their existence in the knowledge that society has found other, and perhaps better, ways of providing the service they pioneered. The W.E.A. is not dwindling away. It is making a bigger contribution in adult education than ever before. The 150,000 students in more than 7,000 formal courses, over a thousand schools and a host of other educational activities are witness to the continuing value of the Association's work and a demonstration that voluntary service is also effective service. The occasion of a policy discussion is, however, the time to ask the most searching question of all. Has the job been done so well that it could now be handed over to the statutory bodies? Should the W.E.A.'s thousands of voluntary workers now be thanked for their services and be left free to find more congenial occupations for their leisure time than that of organising classes for people who can watch *Panorama* at the turn of a switch or readily attend 'Keep Fit' classes at the evening institute to offset the anxieties of a car-owning, diet-conscious society?

5 The answer is that the job is not finished. Progress must be defended: new problems must be faced: adult education must be more than a reflection of current popular interest or a training ground for technologists. It must be a dynamic force in society and the W.E.A. (or if not the W.E.A., something very much like it) is still needed. An independent voluntary body conscious of challenge and determined to meet it is important still to pioneer new courses and reach out to larger numbers of people.

6 The social relevance of adult education. Society has undergone revolutionary changes since the W.E.A. began. For most people there are opportunities for employment, education and leisure unthought of at the beginning of the century. Not all the grosser evils have been banished and still, for too many people, life is a struggle against poverty and squalor. The educational system, though offering much that the founders of the Association could only dream of, is still tainted by social and educational inequality. These are problems of the past which still persist. But there are also new problems, some of them brought about by technological achievement, all of them related to uncertainties about values, directions and purpose in human affairs. In con-

sidering the social problems of today, whether of poverty in the midst of affluence, of delinquency and violence, of racial misunderstanding and hatred, of apathy and alienation in politics, of the erosion of traditional values by mass culture, of the substitution of instant information for thought, the W.E.A. might be forgiven for doubting whether the processes of reason discussion and tolerance, which are the essence of a liberal education, are strong enough to make any impact. But belief in these processes is what gives life to the W.E.A. If it departs from that belief it has no right to claim an important role in adult education or to make demands on voluntary service and public finance. To hold on to that belief and to seek to apply it in dealing with the key social problems of the period must be the distinctive contribution of the Association. It has never been alone in this conviction and its views and many of its aims are widely shared. But in its scope, traditions, methods and determination the W.E.A. is unique. How can it make the maximum impact in the coming years?

7 The answer must begin by recognising what the Association is. It is a democratic student body. Its membership is open to all who attend its classes and to all who are in sympathy with its objects. It is free from all party or sectarian tests. It requires no entrance qualifications from its students other than a willingness to think, to study and to discuss. It offers no material rewards and is not likely to do so, despite the pressures to treat adult education as a means to a qualification for a particular role in society. Inevitably, its aims seem as varied as the people who compose it and any policy declaration it produces must be a statement of intent, a guide to action for its democratic leadership, and not a creed. Because of this there will be differences between what the Association states as its aims and what it actually achieves in particular situations. Every human organisation shares this experience and recognition of it should not be a cause for neurosis but a starting point for self-examination.

8 In the variety of views about the aims of the W.E.A. two main strands in its thinking about the social purpose of adult education have always been present. Too often they have been presented as alternatives with the assumption that the Association must choose between providing a wide range of adult education or concentrating on the study of subjects immediately relevant to

the problems and processes of government and society. The former role, so the argument goes, could now be better undertaken by other agencies.

9 It is a false antithesis. Both aims can be socially relevant. The essence of the first is the value of an educated individual to society. The emphasis of the second is that adult education is an instrument of what, in earlier days, was described as social or political emancipation and is nowadays known as social or political responsibility. There is no reason why these two leading ideas should not continue side by side. The purpose of the W.E.A. is more related to teaching methods and approach than to the subject matter of any particular course. A student who has had effective contact with a good tutor in a good class is likely to be a better informed citizen. If he is a shop steward or a local councillor he is likely to be a more efficient one. In both cases society is likely to benefit.

10 This is not to say that in planning its work the W.E.A. should not have priorities in mind: that it should not plan to stimulate the interest of particular sections of the population (industrial workers, for instance) or that it should be indifferent if a class programme, based on a democratic choice, neglects the study of some range of subjects (sociology, politics, economics or science). This should be put positively. The W.E.A. *must* be prepared to do something about particular needs not, as some might think, to advance sectional interests but to avoid them. Unless special efforts are made to direct it, adult education will (it may already be doing so) create its own self-perpetuating elites. But what must always be of overriding concern is the intention and character of the teaching. What the Association must affirm is the importance both to the individual and to society of a liberal education, and 'it is surely the *manner* in which any course is presented rather than its matter which is crucial in developing a liberal attitude of mind'.*

11 Particular responsibilities. It follows from this that a continuing and essential task for the W.E.A. is to make sure that its standards of teaching are consistently good and relevant to its beliefs. There are, however, special responsibilities which the W.E.A. must consider in determining its priorities.

* R. S. Peters: ***Authority, Responsibility and Education*** (Geo. Allen & Unwin).

12 The Association must be seriously concerned with the problem of the *educationally underprivileged.* The Workers' Educational Association came into existence very largely to cater for the requirements of those deprived of educational opportunity by the inadequacies of the schools and further education system as it then was. It was clearly understood that inequality of educational opportunity was closely related to the division of society into social classes—hence the title 'Workers' Educational Association'. The educational reforms of the twentieth century, and notably the Education Act of 1944, sought to provide greater equality of educational opportunity, and although much has been achieved there is now a mass of evidence to prove that many who could benefit from continued education are not receiving it. The National Survey prepared for the Crowther Report revealed that only 7 per cent of skilled, 4 per cent of semi-skilled and 2 per cent of unskilled workers' sons in the sample stayed on at school beyond the age of sixteen. This continuing inequality is reflected at all levels of the educational system. The Plowden Committee, dealing with primary schools, developed the concept of 'educational priority areas', identifiable by the proportion of manual workers, size of families, overcrowded and broken homes requiring for their immediate improvement 'positive discrimination'. Depressing as this evidence is it nevertheless represents a considerable advance on past conditions, and serious as is the deprivation for the fifteen- to twenty-year-olds, it is worse for those of twenty-five to thirty years of age and much worse for older men and women most of whom left school at fourteen years of age. Clearly there remains an enormous remedial task left for adult education to undertake which will last for at least the remainder of this century.

13 There are, however, other forms of educational deprivation. Women's education has lagged far behind that of men—the proportion of girls in the age group fifteen to twenty receiving full-time education is much lower than that of boys, and in 1961 the Robbins Report showed that 13 per cent of girls with three 'A' levels and 33 per cent with two did not go on to further education. It is not surprising that there is an intense demand for adult education from women.

14 Much of the failure has been a social failure—inadequate social background, class distinctions, overcrowded and broken

homes and parental neglect—and it has been documented fully in recent reports. Can adult education, and particularly the W.E.A., do anything about it?

15 It would be a misconception to think that the W.E.A. or indeed the whole of the adult education service has been, or is now, designed and equipped to remedy such grave social and educational deficiencies. It is not an advanced society's equivalent of a mass campaign against illiteracy. There are, however, some things the W.E.A. can do. It can and must campaign for greater resources to be applied by society to the areas of greatest need in the educational system. This is not a party or sectional matter: it is one of social justice. It should support and reinforce by its own thinking and efforts the research and writing of other bodies. Locally it should undertake its own social and educational surveys and offer its co-operation as a teaching body to those agencies which are equally concerned. It should seek to make effective contact with more of the educationally underprivileged than it is doing at present.

16 The case for a continuing educational service for the fifteen-year-old school leaver has long been shelved. Such interest in liberal studies as is engendered in the school is allowed to wane after leaving through lack of facilities and opportunity for expression in an adult manner. It is likely that they would respond to participation in an adult education organisation for which they were themselves responsible. It would also be a role for new Youth Tutors to link up with the Local Authority Further Education provision in channelling late developers or those with renewed interest in education to the most appropriate facilities. It is an anomaly that young people aged fifteen to eighteen cannot officially be included in the classes of an organisation whose major aim is to cater for the person who left school at fifteen. The more education is seen as a continuing process throughout life the greater will be the need for developments of this kind.

17 All this means radical thinking about methods. Too often, what the Association does appears to many intelligent but 'non-intellectual' people to be 'academic', 'highbrow', 'precious' and 'not for me'. These may be emotive terms often used in a rationalising way. However wrong they may be (and they are not always

wrong) they represent a fact—the existence of a gulf between adult education and large numbers of the population. The problem for the W.E.A. in considering what can be done to bridge the gulf is that at the heart of its provision are the qualities already implied—disciplined study, scholarship and academic standards. Too often these seem alien to the cultural interests of the working class: the language spoken is not the same. The W.E.A. cannot desert its belief in the values of a liberal education or lower its standards of teaching. But it ought to consider the question of communication (both in terms of publicity and presentation): of teaching methods and of the use of teaching materials. It should encourage both its voluntary workers and its tutors to seek new contacts in new places. What is needed is a more flexible and experimental approach in developing new ideas and programmes. Much of the Association's publicity and presentation is too academic and conventional. How does the W.E.A. recruit from the new housing estates, the pubs, clubs and community centres? It needs tutors who can discuss and utilise interests in films, pop music, TV and practical examples of modern folk cultures. The best examples of branch experience and ideas must be disseminated for others to copy.

18 The W.E.A. welcomes recent developments in *workers' education*. It has always provided an educational service for working class movements, notably the trade unions. This service is extending, in partnership with the T.U.C. Education Department, and is now available for all trade unionists. W.E.A. districts are represented on the regional education advisory committees of the T.U.C. and the Association now provides some 200 classes and 350 weekend and day schools annually. A further strengthening of this work should be a main objective. An important development in recent years has been the growth of industrially based courses for shop stewards (some of them under T.U.C. auspices, some of them with particular industries and unions). Most W.E.A. districts now take part in this work and a number of them employ specialist tutors in industrial relations for the purpose. Day-release courses which form the main part of this provision are (on the present scale) a new feature in workers' education. They make available tutorial class standards and methods to many industrial workers who might not otherwise be reached by adult education and who can devote more time to their studies than is often

possible in evening classes. In this way many trade unionists are introduced to the movement and should be encouraged to play a more active part in branch life.

19 All this may, in years to come, be seen as little less than a revolution in workers' education. In welcoming it, the Association should again ask a basic question. Now that so many opportunities are available, or potentially available for industrial workers, is the W.E.A.'s provision still necessary? The answer is that the Association has its own distinctive contribution to make: to emphasise the importance of liberal studies in the new workers' education. The T.U.C., quite properly, is concerned with the training of shop stewards and trade union leaders, as such. Any trade union education department must have the same priority. Education in this setting means an equipment in techniques to deal with the increasing complexities of industrial relations. Industrial training is geared to the demands of developing technology. Everyone concerned recognises the need for a broader education but only the educational bodies like the W.E.A. can put the emphasis on a liberal education (not merely a dose of liberal studies added to technical training). The pressures on all directly concerned with industry to produce efficient shop stewards, managers and technicians are great. The W.E.A. should welcome the chance of contributing something of its traditional approach. It should also welcome the opportunity of contact with many workers who are not reached by its general provision.

20 Valuable as this new growth is, the W.E.A. recognises that a gap has been left in workers' education since the W.E.T.U.C. and the National Council of Labour Colleges were wound up. These organisations, whatever their defects, were able to provide many trade unionists with an educational service in the broader fields of social, political and cultural studies. The W.E.A. can, with the goodwill of the trade union movement, do much to bridge the gap. The British trade union movement has always valued education and fought to sustain and improve it. The W.E.A. need have no doubt of the sympathy of the trade unions (many of which support the Association financially) in its broader tasks. What must be emphasised is the need for thought and initiative in linking the new workers' education with the W.E.A.'s voluntary democratic and liberal traditions.

21 Two important reports on the implications of *social and industrial change* in large conurbations have recently been prepared for the W.E.A.* They demonstrate new opportunities and tasks for the W.E.A. in situations of urban change. The Association should use them as a general guide to its development. Their findings and recommendations are, in detail, primarily a matter for action by the branches and districts concerned in Manchester and the West Midlands. The general point they make is one the W.E.A. should take to heart everywhere. This is the need for policies and planning to be based on accurate social analysis; for the promotion of social studies courses (community studies, growth and change in industry, the reform of local government, etc.) having a direct relevance to the needs of changing communities. These two reports are a model of the type of survey that the Association should endeavour to produce elsewhere. Whether social analysis is applied to large industrial conurbations, to smaller towns or to rural areas, the purpose is the same, to fit the W.E.A. to deal with conditions and needs as they are, not as they were fifty, or even twenty-five, years ago. This process of self-examination in the localities is not an easy task for a voluntary movement. It is easier, and superficially more rewarding to proceed on well-tried lines. The process is, however, essential or the W.E.A. will succumb to the temptation of thinking that statements of principle are equivalent to effective action. Without disparaging the achievements of many W.E.A. branches, based on the community as it was years ago and probably increasing their class provision today and using all the fashionable titles, there should be serious inquiry as to whether their work is in touch with the new community and its present needs. For example, there are many cities with a considerable population of immigrants setting up their own educational and cultural centres in their localities. They are looking for an educational service which provides more than just teaching. Here is an opportunity for the W.E.A. to give special help and in some areas this is already being done. In attempting this the Association faces problems of how to relate these needs to its traditional branch organisation. In such circumstances much thought will have to be given to possible different types of local organisation or the

* A survey of W.E.A. work in the Manchester conurbation 1961–68 and a survey of the W.E.A. work in the Birmingham and West Midland conurbation 1960–67 both by Cecil A. Scrimgeour.

immigrant students may not be involved in the W.E.A. at all: they will be people in receipt of a service whose source is so vague as to be meaningless.

22 Planning a programme of studies should start with a survey of the area and a diagnosis of the major problems affecting the community. As a social movement the W.E.A. is primarily concerned to promote the study of the developing problems of man in society; and to pose fundamental questions of values. This is more a question of approach than of subject-matter in any narrow sense. In the final analysis, there should be no such thing as a 'W.E.A. subject', or the opposite. Motor car maintenance or dressmaking can lead on naturally to questions of planning and economics and history and design and art. Practically any subject can be taught in a limited or escapist manner, or can be related to the major social and philosophical issues. It is with the latter that the W.E.A. must seek to be concerned. It must attract into its ranks those people in the community who are concerned to analyse, to challenge and to reform; and to increase their numbers. This must be the answer to those critics who suggest that the Association is still too involved in the promotion of courses in 'popular' subjects.

23 The W.E.A. is already committed to support for the White Paper on 'A Policy For The Arts', but as a flexible organisation it is especially concerned to cope with the underlying problems and to seek imaginative ways of bridging the present cultural gaps which Wesker in 'Centre 42' sought to overcome. The establishment of Arts Centres can only be effective insofar as they are supported by adequate ground work which would overcome the innate resistance to cultural activities in our society. As an educational body the W.E.A. is concerned with those aspects of man's personality, thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition which are likely to develop through art, music, literature and drama. There is an urgent need to explore ways of bridging the gulfs between the practical expression of the arts and passive appreciation; involvement of artistic creators in the teaching situation may well be a means to achieve this. The present artificial division between theory and practice of treatment of the arts in adult education should be abolished. It is clearly not sufficient simply to work in co-operation with other voluntary cultural groups as this will tend only to reinforce the existing social barriers.

24 W.E.A. planning processes are democratically pursued: voluntary workers at times need the encouragement of success: teaching grants are usually related to statistical results: districts and branches depend on class fees for much of their income. At another level the criticism that branch and district programmes contain only 'popular' subjects plays down the point about the liberal approach to any subject, already discussed. What is valid in the criticism is that the Association too often gives way to the temptation to follow the trend and makes too little effort to produce balanced teaching programmes. Any providing body can offer popular classes; the W.E.A. should not feel guilty in doing so. It should be worried if it is attempting nothing else. But it should recognise that less popular, but socially important, subjects will mean hard work in recruitment.

25 Resources and requirements. The W.E.A. has never been sufficiently endowed with financial and material resources but it is rich in voluntary service. However justified its claims for more money and more full-time workers may be and however vigorously they are pressed, its first need is to encourage and help its voluntary workers. The kind of adult education with which the W.E.A. is concerned can thrive only if it is based on the people and if its initiatives come largely from them. Student democracy must be actively concerned with planning the whole programme and must not be reduced to the level of taking decisions only about such matters as 'tea breaks'. The Working Party's Report made recommendations designed to help branch officers and other voluntary workers. In view of this there is no need for much detail here. Two points, however, should be made. The first is that the *ideas* which abound in the W.E.A., including those discussed earlier, should be discussed fully throughout the movement. There must be many people in classes who would like to take part in the debate: they should be encouraged to do so. The second is that there must be a careful examination of the relationship that should exist between voluntaryism and professionalism. The W.E.A. needs more staff—tutors, development officers, administrators. Its chances of appointing them depend mainly upon the weight it can put behind its claim to be a dynamic, pioneering, democratic movement. Local authorities and university extra-mural departments continue to employ more full-time staff. If voluntary workers assume that the initiatives can be left

to the professionals: if the professionals assume that voluntaryism can only be effective at the 'tea-break' level: worse still, if the atmosphere becomes one of 'them' and 'us' the result will be fatal. The prime domestic task of the Association is to pay continuing attention to its voluntary side and to enlist every possible means of doing so—improved communications within the movement, training courses and materials for voluntary workers, the constant examination of particular problems, for example, the staffing of large branches. Nor should it overlook the need for educating its tutors about the aims and methods of a voluntary movement. Too often (not because of lack of will but because of lack of time on the part of branch workers) the tutor is the main link between his students and the Association: too often his attitude (often unwittingly) can vitiate all the effort the voluntary workers have contributed to the establishment of his class.

26 Another aspect of voluntaryism is that of the way in which it is harnessed. For the most part it operates through local branches dealing with the W.E.A.'s work in a geographical area and having links with the District and Central bodies. The local branch has been, and still is, of central importance to the W.E.A.: the neighbourhood (the provisos previously discussed) is still the right base for most of its work. But because so much has depended on local branches and so much of the hard work is done by them, the Association often overlooks additional, and complementary, ways of enlisting voluntary activity. W.E.A. Districts, and the branches themselves, are federal bodies. They have been, and could be again, effective meeting places for representatives of diverse interests in adult education. In the past the W.E.A. consisted not only of local branches but of other educational interests. The practice of concentrating as much as possible of the work into local branches was sound but developments in the postwar years, including the growth of the W.E.A. as a servicing body for other organisations, call for some fresh thinking about local organisation and representation. The keynote of the Working Party Report was the need for student involvement in W.E.A. affairs. What can be done about involving students in day-release classes, trade union linked weekend courses, women's organisations, or classes for immigrants in the democratic processes of the Association? Are new types of local organisation, closely associated with existing forms, a real possibility?

The Association needs to revise its structure in many areas to fit the changing social environment, particularly in conurbations. In addition to the normal geographical units, it must consider relating its organisation to the needs of different functional groups. These could be industrial branches linked to day-release and factory based classes, branches serving 'non-local' communities linked by different types of interest and branches serving day-time classes as distinct from the ones which attract people in the evenings. If specialised branches of this type are established, can they be brought together at the District level in a common movement with a common sense of purpose?

27 The need for more full-time staff has been touched on. It was a major feature of the Working Party Report. It is such an essential part of the total resources of the W.E.A. that it must be central in all the Association's plans and the need is not elaborated here.

28 In assessing the W.E.A.'s resources, however, the fact that it has never worked alone, and that it has more allies, real and potential, than ever before must not be overlooked. There was a time when the Association tended to look on developments in adult education, other than its own, with some suspicion and words like 'competition', 'duplication' and 'dilution' were freely used. This outlook may have arisen from the feeling that the number of potential students was limited. Postwar experience has shown, however, that the student population grows with the increase of facilities. The only limiting factor of any consequence is lack of money to provide the facilities. The W.E.A., if it ever was really worried about competition, need now only think in terms of co-operation.

29 Historically there is a close partnership in adult education between the universities and the W.E.A. At the turn of the century the Association was formed to bring the universities into a more effective contact with the people than had existed previously. University scholarship, teaching and traditions moulded the early tutorial class movement. W.E.A. students, in turn, gave university teachers insight into the needs, experiences and ideas of people outside the universities which enriched their university work. This cross-fertilisation was, and still is, important in adult education; the tutorial *method* is still its main instrument. Until comparatively

recently nearly all that universities contributed to adult education was done through the W.E.A. It is not so now. Many extra-mural departments have seen the W.E.A.'s special concerns and organising arrangements as a limiting factor and they have reached out widely into areas of work which are not the direct concern of the Association. Change of this kind was inevitable. The Association should realise that the university partnership has helped to create a voluntary movement able to stand on its own feet and that, in fact, in many of the tasks the W.E.A. undertakes the partnership is as dependable as ever. The Association pays tribute to universities and university people who are amongst its strongest allies and who still help it to maintain tutorial class work whether in traditional forms, or in new forms like day-release courses. The W.E.A. still needs the best that universities can give in adult education; the best teachers, the best scholarship, the best help in research and thinking about what the Association has yet to do. The W.E.A. has the responsibility of thinking clearly about its distinctive role in modern adult education. It has the right to ask the universities to define *their* distinctive contribution so that the two parties can continue to work together with maximum efficiency.

30 The university world has changed greatly in recent years and the part to be played in adult education by the many new university institutions that now exist has not been defined. The W.E.A. hopes that those which come into the work in the future will be guided by the same concern for university values, related to the needs of adult education as a movement in its own right, as have existed hitherto. A new type of university will enter the scene in the very near future—the Open University. The W.E.A. has been concerned with its planning and welcomes the new opportunities that it will provide for many people. It should be seen as a partner in, and an ally of existing forms of adult education. Education by means of radio and television has already stimulated many intellectual and cultural interests among more people than adult educational bodies have ever been able to reach: many of these people have turned to more systematic study and have learned to appreciate the value of direct contact with skilled teachers. The Open University will rely on this kind of contact for its students and will need the full co-operation of adult education. The help the W.E.A. will be able to give will depend on what additional

teaching, organising and administration resources which are made available to it. It is too early to discuss this new opportunity in any detail but it seems likely that the Association's main contribution will be to the new university's preparatory courses. In offering its co-operation the W.E.A. should require the same freedom in planning and teaching that it considers indispensable in all its work.

31 The outstanding growth in adult education in the last few years has been in the provision made by local authorities in their evening institutes, adult education centres, colleges of further education and other establishments. Most of it is in recreational and craft subjects but there has been much development in courses and subjects similar to those provided by the W.E.A. itself or by university extra-mural departments. Many authorities now employ tutors and administrators imbued with the ideas and enthusiasms of the W.E.A. at its best.

It is no longer sensible to talk in the old terms of 'further education' (a kind of night school) and 'adult education' as if they were doomed to eternal separation. There is much crossing of the lines in subject provision and there is for the W.E.A. potentially a new kind of partnership rich in possibilities. There is already much co-operation (as well as financial support). It ranges from the publication of W.E.A. programmes in evening institute brochures to the planning of joint programmes with evening institute principals: from the use of a classroom in a further education establishment to the provision of special W.E.A. rooms, including branch offices, in L.E.A. premises. It covers joint appointments of tutors and organisers and the appointment of W.E.A./University principals in adult education centres maintained by local authorities. The complex of relationships is so varied that it is impossible to summarise. The complexity arises from the nature of adult education, from the fact that it depends on local initiatives and, indeed, upon personalities. Branches and Districts should seek the best possible working arrangements with local authority colleagues and institutions on the basis that both agencies are working in the same field, not as rivals but as partners. There should be advantages to both though there will be problems. There will be the problems for voluntary workers, with limited time, of trying to match the professional and sometimes despairing of doing so. There will be the problem of convincing

W.E.A. students at an evening institute that they are part of a movement with a life of its own. There will be problems arising from the (very desirable) establishment of student associations in L.E.A. establishments. There is the general problem of defining, in situations like this the distinctive role of the W.E.A. There is encouraging evidence of goodwill. It should be fostered by making arrangements for local authorities to be represented on W.E.A. development committees, branch and district committees and by seeking reciprocal arrangements for the W.E.A. to be represented on the management committees of local authority adult education institutions. In these joint activities every effort must be made to safeguard the identity of the Association within the partnership.

32 A final note on assessing the W.E.A.'s resources need only be brief. The Association should co-operate wherever possible with other organisations, voluntary as well as statutory, concerned with adult education. It should think of itself as serving the community, of offering co-operation and teaching help as widely as its resources will properly allow on the basis that adult education is an open system in which there is everything to gain by co-operation and everything to lose by working within artificial barriers.

33 The W.E.A. branch must seek to be a key element in the community it serves. It should attract the attention and co-operation of the active people in the numerous social organisations that operate within a democratic society. Many opportunities will arise for common initiatives: for example, in the discussion of educational policy with the teachers' organisations, C.A.S.E. and parents, the Nursery Schools' Association, the Comprehensive Schools Committee and similar bodies, the local political parties and Trades Councils. In other fields of social policy similar possibilities of co-operation arise with different groups.

34 The W.E.A. as a providing body. The fact that the W.E.A. can employ its own tutors and is able to provide, direct and administer a considerable educational programme of its own is a source of great strength. That there are limitations and difficulties does not detract from this: it is no more than a reflection of

inadequate financial resources. The task the Association is setting for itself in the coming years will require the most efficient use of its powers as a providing body. If it claims to be able to do indispensable things in adult education: if it is to be in fact more than a kind of consumers' association it must strengthen its powers as a teaching and servicing organisation. The recent establishment of the Association's Service Centre for Social Studies is a new initiative of great importance which is already proving its value. The W.E.A. must use it to the full to assist its tutors to give an educational service to other organisations and to improve its own internal communications and discussions. Providing and servicing resources must be expanded. The Association should not hesitate to press its claim for greater financial support from the Department of Education and Science and Local Education Authorities. More money is needed not because the W.E.A. wishes to build an empire of its own but because its work is a vital necessity to society. Not only are greater resources needed for teaching purposes, they are needed to improve the Association's administrative and organising arrangements and the Department of Education and Science should be asked to take full account of this. Good teaching is dependent on good organising and administration. They are two aspects of the same job. The W.E.A. has shown that it can contribute voluntary service on all fronts. From its own students, members and affiliated bodies considerable sums of money are regularly contributed. It should have no hesitation in calling on public funds for additional help.

35 The W.E.A.'s status as a Responsible Body may have led to its advantages being accepted as a matter of course. It is as well that the Association should restate them in order to value them properly. Responsible Body status means, in practice:

(*a*) that tutors can, and should, be an integral part of the voluntary movement. Tutors employed by other bodies are less likely to feel fully involved in W.E.A. affairs than those employed by the Association itself. Tutors are an indispensable link between the voluntary movement and its students;

(*b*) that the W.E.A. can call upon a body of tutors for whom thought and experiment in teaching methods for *W.E.A. purposes* is a special responsibility;

(*c*) that the Association can give direct help to other organisations which have educational needs (trade union education is one example). By so doing the W.E.A. is not merely providing a service of importance, but has the means of interesting other bodies in the purposes and opportunities of adult education itself;

(*d*) that W.E.A. teaching, particularly in controversial subjects, is undertaken with the maximum freedom;

(*e*) that a voluntary body which is also a providing body is a practical demonstration of an alternative kind of democratic responsibility and control. The students themselves participate in creating and maintaining the standards of the Association's work. This in itself is a process of adult education.

36 Conclusion

The responsibilities before the Association are great. It has, however, proved that it can make an important contribution to adult education and need not fear new tasks.

They can be entered into with confidence if its resources are used well and if W.E.A. workers, voluntary and professional, show the kind of enterprise and imagination which have distinguished its work so far. The W.E.A. is a *workers'* educational association—for workers by hand and brain, for wage and salary earners and those who, like the majority of housewives, work without direct financial reward. As a social movement it works to provide education for those whose need is greatest, the 'educationally underprivileged'. Experience teaches that those with least educational opportunity are the least likely to demand it, especially once they have come to regard themselves as rejected by the educational system, whether at eleven years of age, at fifteen, or through failure to be admitted to higher education. Broadly speaking, teachers and other professional groups are eager to join adult education classes whereas this is not so for unskilled workers who left school at a minimum age. If an educated society is to be achieved, adult education must cater for the needs of the majority. Education cannot be limited to an elite, cannot divide a democracy into 'us' and 'them'. The W.E.A. of all bodies must attempt the difficult task of bridging the educational gulf

that separates the nation. It is impelled to do this by its history, its ethos, its partnership with the trade unions and by the need to fit for their important role within modern society those who are the potential leaders and 'opinion formers'.

37 The name of the Association is synonymous with all that is important in liberal adult education in this country. Suggestions that the name should be altered, perhaps 'modernised', have been made from time to time. A name is not everything, but any title that failed to convey the Association's concern about the social relevance of adult education and its will to stimulate the interest of people whose traditions are non-academic would be unsatisfactory. At the best it would be anonymous, colourless: at the worst a sign that the Association was departing from its best traditions.

38 The whole implication of this policy statement is that the Association as it has been known for so many years is capable of making a contribution to the new society as important as that which it has made in the past: that, in fact, its work is by no means finished, but has just begun.

ERIC Clearinghouse
APR 6 1970
on Adult Education